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THE CORROBORATION OF PROFESSOR HUXLEY.

BY JOHN BURROUGHS.

DR. LYMAN ABBOTT, in criticising Professor Huxley in a recent number of this REVIEW, loses sight of a very important distinction—a distinction which Professor Huxley keeps constantly before him in the articles referred to ; namely, the distinction between objective and subjective truth, between a statement or a proposition which rests upon outward, independent, logical evidence, and is addressed to the reason and the understanding, and one which is purely personal and subjective, involving the taste, the emotions, the hopes, the aspirations, and which is true or false according to the temper and experience of the person to whom it is addressed. When our theological doctors talk of the evidences of Christianity, they lay great stress upon the historical evidences ; the root of the matter is here ; these are real, objective, positive, and are matters of logical and scientific inquiry. The subjective evidences—that is, those which are furnished by the mental or spiritual experience of the individual and beget a feeling of certainty and security in his mind,—these are of quite a different nature, and our logical faculties can have little to do with them.

Professor Huxley, in his *Nineteenth Century* articles referred to, applies the scientific method of inquiry to certain alleged occurrences in the New Testament—occurrences which must rest upon objective evidence, if upon any, and in which the appeal of credibility is made, not to our faculty of spiritual insight, but to our reason and understanding. Is the story of the Gadarene swine probable ? is it reasonable ? does it agree with the rest of our knowledge ? “The Gadarene miracle either happened, or it did not. Whether the Gadarene ‘question’ is moral or religious, or not, has nothing to do with the fact that it is a purely historical question whether the demons said what they are declared to have said,

and the devil-possessed pigs did or did not rush over the cliffs of the Lake of Gennesaret on a certain day of a certain year," etc. "If that is not a matter about which evidence ought to be required, and not only legal but strict scientific proof demanded by sane men who are asked to believe the story—what is it?" Professor Huxley thinks a man who believes such a story without logical evidence is guilty of an immoral act. And so generally with the miracles recorded in the New Testament, and with demonology and possessions. These things are alleged occurrences in the outward physical world, and they are not supported by adequate objective evidence.

Men reason upon the subject of the soul's immortality, but the answer which reason gives is mainly in the negative. There is nothing that could be called evidence that man continues to live after the dissolution of his body. Yet Dr. Abbott is convinced that he does so exist; he realizes in himself "a nature superior to disease, decay, mortality"; and who shall gainsay him? who shall say he is illogical? The evidence he has upon this point is personal and subjective, and cannot be imparted to another. It has no logical or scientific validity, because it begins and ends with himself. It is not a question of reason, but of religious conviction. But all the questions in dispute between Professor Huxley and Dr. Wace are questions of reason and of evidence. They pertain to the outward, visible, concrete world of history and of experience, and can be settled in no court but the court of reason.

Dr. Abbott says (and he assumes to speak for "the great mass of Christian believers") "that there are propositions which men ought to believe without logically-satisfying evidence." This is what the old Mother Church used to say, and used to back it up with the stake and the rack. "Ought to believe"; that is, it is a man's duty to believe certain propositions addressed to his rational faculties, without rationally-satisfying evidence. It is to be regretted that the good doctor did not cite some theological or religious proposition, or some article from the creeds, that it is a man's duty thus to believe. Would he say that a man ought to believe any of the points in dispute between Professor Huxley and Dr. Wace without "logically-satisfying evidence"?—the swine story, the authorship of the Gospels, that Jesus said what he is reported to have said, that demonology is true, etc., etc.?

Professor Huxley, I imagine, would be the last man in the world to deny Dr. Abbott's proposition that there is such a thing as spiritual insight, or the religious sense, and that certainties, or at least assurances and satisfaction, reach the soul through these avenues. The religious nature or the poetic and artistic nature is not occupied with logical processes or the reasons of things, but with impressions, attractions, intuitions, emotional processes, the divine, the beautiful, the enjoyable. We do not ask of a poem, or a work of art, or any work of pure literature, Is it true? as we would ask of a proposition of science, or the statement of a witness upon the stand, or the declaration of a creed, Is it true? but, Is it good? is it powerful? is it satisfying? does it move and nourish us? A poem must have poetic truth, but how different is this from mathematical or scientific truth, and by what different faculties apprehended! Neither do we ask of purely religious utterances like the Sermon on the Mount or Paul's Epistles, Are they true? but, Do they stimulate and exalt our religious sense? do they quicken and purify the spirit? Paul's theology may be true or false: what is forever true and real is his fervid piety, his spiritual power, his eloquent humility, and his love for mankind. His logical faculties may have been weak; the things which he believed, which lay in his understanding and satisfied his reason, may have been utterly inadequate to stand rigid tests, but for all that the power and value of his writings are beyond question. The same may be said of some of the fathers of the church, weak in reason, but strong in the spirit. Professor Huxley is strong in reason; his logic is a chain hard to break; but highly spiritual and imaginative natures would, perhaps, find little satisfaction in his writings. He is occupied with objective truth, not with subjective impressions. His mind is strictly scientific, and the results of his method of inquiry are hard to controvert.

He does not deny the moral sense, or the æsthetic sense, or the religious sense, as Dr. Abbott would seem to imply; he is not discussing questions that lie in either of these realms, but questions that come within the scope of reason and are matters of evidence. The questions of right and wrong in human conduct, of lying, of stealing, of murder, etc., which Dr. Abbott introduces, belong to quite a different sphere from the question of the authorship of the Gospels or of the credibility of the miracles.

There is the appeal to conscience, the appeal to taste, the appeal to our sense of the fitness of things, and there is also the appeal to reason, to the judgment, to our power to weigh and sift evidence. It seems to me that Dr. Abbott confounds these things, and in his reply to Huxley sets up a man of straw. If the great scientist had said that all truth and certainty come through the logical faculties, he would have laid himself open to the doctor's criticism. What he did say or imply was that all scientific, all objective, truth comes through our logical faculties. These are his words: "It is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty."

In the outward objective world a fact is always a fact. It is always pertinent to inquire into the truth of any alleged occurrence. St. Augustine says that the flesh of the peacock never decays. Is this a fact? If it was a fact in his day, it must be a fact in ours. Do miracles happen? have they ever happened? Is there a personal devil? Are we surrounded by a multitude of good and bad spirits who are seeking to influence our lives? Any objective evidence of the truth and reality of these things must hold good at all times and in all places. Two and two always make four, and doubtless always will. But when we enter the region of morals, we are in a world where all is plastic, indefinite, relative. Right and wrong are so only under certain conditions. It may be right to lie and steal and murder under certain extraordinary circumstances. "The certainties of the moral and spiritual realm" to which Dr. Abbott refers, and upon which he says "all æsthetic, all domestic, all political and national life are based," are not outward demonstrable certainties, like those of science, but inward personal certainties, which involve our constitution and our temporary relations to the universe and to each other.

Dr. Abbott says he feels but a languid interest in the critical discussion as to the authorship of the four Gospels. This may well be. It may be because Dr. Abbott is not primarily interested in questions of evidence, or in logical and reasoning processes. He is a moralist and preacher, and seeks the springs of conduct, not the sources of logical conviction. I believe he accepts the doctrine of demoniacal possession; it seems to suit his emotional and imaginative type of mind. But a man of science, as such, could

no more accept such an explanation of any form of insanity than he could attribute crystallization to the work of fairies or the wind and the storm to furies. The authorship of the four Gospels may not be a vital question to the religious mind, but, as a question, it is a matter of evidence, and not at all of personal impression.

If Christianity really rested upon evidence, if its vitality was solely dependent upon verifiable facts and considerations, like a work of science, it would have perished from the earth long ago. But it does not live by its so-called evidences. Christianity is largely a matter of the heart, of the feelings and the emotions. It has not rested upon logical evidences; its main hold in the first instance has not been upon men's scientific faculties, but upon their hopes, fears, aspirations, and spiritual cravings. Paul says: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." Neither can he. To talk about the reasonableness of Christianity is like talking about the reasonableness of magic or witchcraft. The human faculties are utterly powerless before its main tenets. Christianity has the vitality of literature, of poetry and art. The Gospel records have wonderful, even magical, power as literature. They are true, not as history, but as poetry.

The myth of the resurrection will be kept alive for ages to come, notwithstanding all that has been or can be urged against it, because mankind have such a profound interest in believing it.

Christianity does not offer a system of philosophy, but a religious incentive. When it attempts to play the rôle of interpreter of the visible order of the universe, or to satisfy our rational faculties, its failure is pathetic; its proofs are childish; its science is essentially pagan; its story of the fall as an explanation of the origin of evil, and its "plan of salvation" as a means of escape from that evil, as science, do not rise above any of the delusions of the pagan world. The story of the Chaldee god, Bel, who cut off his own head, moistened the clay with his blood, and then made man out of it, is just as rational an explanation of the origin of man as the one the Christian Church has always adhered to. In fact, the whole basis of our theology, the conception of Jesus as a supernatural person who had no earthly father, and who rose from the dead and ascended bodily up into heaven, etc., is essentially pagan, and belongs to an order of things that has long since passed away. The power of Christian-

ity is a spiritual power ; it is in its appeals to the ideal of the gentle, the merciful, the meek, the forgiving, the pure in heart—an ideal which has such an attraction for the European nations; and also to the love of reward and the fear of punishment which materialistic ages foster. In one is its charm for fine natures; in the other its power over the multitude.

Theological writers are in general prone to magnify subjective certitude at the expense of objective proof ; to place faith above reason, in the domain of reason. They sneer at science and logic as if in their sphere they could be dispensed with and something else be substituted in their place. Thus Professor Blackie, in that vituperative book of his, “The Natural History of Atheism,”—a book the style of which is like a man going through a house and banging the doors behind him,—says, as a finishing stroke to the “drivel” of our “boastful science,” that the “highest cognitions are never reached by the mere exercise of the knowing faculties, on whatever subject exercised.” Not even, I suppose, when exercised upon the multiplication-table! “Instinct and aspiration,” he goes on to say, “are higher than knowledge; and the pretensions of the merely scientific man to assume the dictatorship of things that be are not founded on nature. Many things can be known only by being felt; all vital forces are fundamentally unknowable; but they exist not the less because would-be philosopher B or would-be philosopher C has no machinery with which to measure or control them.” Are instinct and aspiration “cognitions”? Do they belong to the sphere of knowledge? Do they even point to any certain and demonstrable conclusions? They may or they may not be higher than knowledge; it is certain that they cannot take the place of knowledge. Instinct and aspiration enlightened by knowledge is the desirable order, is it not? The only thing the scientific man assumes is that the scientific method is the only proper one with which to deal with the objective world of fact and experience. If the professor meant to say that some things are to be felt and not known, he is near the truth. The facts of science are to be known; we may know Kepler’s laws; we can hardly feel them, since they are not personal. But truths of art, of poetry, of religion, are to be felt, whether we know them or not. They come to us by a synthetical, not by an analytical, process.

I have no disposition to overrate our mere knowing faculties; I only want to say that what we *know* we know through them.

What we feel, or fancy, or hope forms no part of our true knowledge, and may come through other avenues. The perception of the beautiful is not a part of our knowledge; neither is the perception of the moral or the spiritual. These things are from within; they are subjective and not objective, and not within the range of the scientific faculties. They are real, just as pleasure and pain are real; they are experiences of the mind. The whole sphere of religion lies here; the kingdom of heaven is within you, not in some outward relation or condition.

Neither do I not wish to imply that there is any feud between science and true religion, between that part of man's nature which thirsts for exact knowledge—the red rays of the spectrum, so to speak—and that part of his nature which we call the spiritual, and which fades off into the vast unknown—the violet rays, at the other extreme; nor between either of these and his æsthetic nature, his love of beautiful forms, though in different individuals these different parts will not be equally developed, nor will they be equally active in different races and times. The feud is between true science and false science; between the conception of an order that is rational and one that is irrational, between modern pathology and Indian “medicine.”

Exact science deals with and can only deal with the objective, the rigid, inexorable world of law. With the subjective, the world within us, the world of personality, whence comes all we call literature, art, religion, philosophy, etc., it cannot deal. Here exact demonstration is not possible; all is plastic, growing, conflicting, aspiring, indeterminate. The personal element modifies everything. The laws by which insensate bodies act and react upon each other may be determined, but the laws by which persons act and react upon each other are quite another matter. In the subjective world truth is relative, but in the world of science truth is absolute. Chemical elements always combine in the same proportions; moisture is always precipitated from the air under the same conditions; the operations of physical nature are uniform; given the same conditions, and the same results always follow. Doubtless the same results always follow the same conditions in the world of mind and personality also, but here the conditions are more obscure and more fluctuating, and science cannot grasp them.

Every original mind may have, and usually does have, a phi-

losophy of its own, a religion of its own, a political creed of its own, literary preferences of its own; but every mind cannot have a science of its own. The personal element is alien to science. How many systems of philosophies have there been from Aristotle down to Spencer? How many times have the old problems been explained? But one man's science must be another man's science; all science is a whole—a pushing farther and farther of the lines of knowledge into nature.

The hostility between the scientific and the spiritual, or the truly religious, may well cease, if, indeed, there ever has been, or ever can be, real hostility. We are bound to give the reason and the understanding full sway in their own proper fields. In subduing and in utilizing this world, or adjusting ourselves to it, we have no guide but science. Yet science is not the main part of life, notwithstanding all the noise it is making in the world. Science is making a great noise in the world because it is doing a great work. Literature, art, religion, speculation, have had their day; that is, the highest achievements of which they are capable are undoubtedly of the past. But science is young; it is now probably only in the heat of its forenoon work. It is a little curious that man's knowing faculties, the first to be appealed to, should be the latest in maturing; that he should worship so profoundly, admire so justly, act so wisely and heroically, while he yet knew so little accurately of the world in which he was placed. Does not this fact point to the conclusion that science is not the main part of life? It is probably the main part of our material civilization, of that by which we are clothed and fed and warmed and transported, defended in war and housed in peace; but of an intrinsic civilization it forms a less part. The old Greek had little or no material civilization in the modern sense; his civilization was personal and mental. What distinguishes the modern man is not his personal superiority, but the enormous engines and deft appliances with which he is fenced and armed, and the greatness of his material triumphs.

Yet knowledge is not discredited, reason is not supplanted. We can no more dispense with them than we can dispense with the bones in our bodies. They furnish the framework by which our lives are upheld. All the certainty we have of the order of the objective world comes through our rational faculties,

The Agnostic does not merely say that all knowledge is imperfect and fragmentary, nor that all certainty is based on the logical faculty ; but simply that the understanding goes upon evidence ; that in this world we have no guide to objective truth but our rational faculties. He finds no room for what our religious brethren call faith, because faith, as commonly understood, is a fatal undertow that swamps and drowns reason. He finds many things and enjoys many things which he cannot understand ; he is not a stranger to the thrill of awe and reverence in the presence of the great mystery of the universe ; but all propositions relative to the plans, ways, and nature of that mystery that are not verifiable, he fights shy of.

JOHN BURROUGHS.